



Social Exchange Networks and Historical Experiences: Following a Maize-Fertilizer Intervention in Babati (Tanzania)

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Abstract

In Tanzania, the promotion of seed-fertilizer technologies has been a central concern of development programs and interventions for almost five decades. Past initiatives typically relied on cost relieving and knowledge building means in order to raise farmers' interest and capacity for adoption. However, current estimations suggest that only about 10% of farmers in the country use improved seeds, whilst about 12% apply inorganic fertilizers with the majority located in the Southern Highlands. In 2014 researchers of the R4D project Africa RISING conducted an experiment in three villages in the Babati District, northern Tanzania. They investigated farmers' "willingness to pay" for both improved maize seeds and inorganic fertilizers. The experiment's design corresponds to the principal rationales of past development interventions. It reflects the general lack of inclusion of non-economic social-science perspectives in research on agro-inputs and their adoption in Tanzania. Our study recapitulates the "willingness to pay" experiment considering the wider social, cultural, and historical context. It describes and analyzes the course and outcomes of the experiment as well as the underlying processes leading to them. It is based on an extensive literature review and over 50 semi-structured interviews with participating male and female farmers, implementers, district officers, and representatives of previous development interventions in the district. The results demonstrate the important role of historical experiences and social exchange networks as factors that shape farmers' decisions to adopt or reject improved seeds, inorganic fertilizers and the agricultural practices associated with them. Farmer-to-farmer exchange revolves around ox-ploughing, land, manure and labor with differential positions along stratifying lines (e.g. gender and class). Such an approach enables us to explore who could potentially benefit from maize-fertilizer technologies.

Key Words: Fertilizer, Improved Seeds, Social Exchange Networks, Adoption, Tanzania

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